NUMB. CLXV.

The GUARDIAN.

Decipit Exemplar, vitiis imitabile——— Hor.

Saturday, September 19. 1713.

IT is a melancholy Thing to ſee a Coxcomb at the Head of a Family. He ſcatters Infection through the whole Houſe. His Wife and Children have always their Eyes upon him: If they have more Senſe than himſelf, they are out of Countenance for him; If leſs, they ſubmit their Underſtandings to him, and make daily Improvements in Folly and Impertinence. I have been very often ſecretly concerned, when I have ſeen a Circle of pretty Children cramped in their natural Parts, and pratling even below themſelves, while they are talking after a couple of ſilly Parents. The Dulneſs of a Father often extinguiſhes a Genius in the Son, or gives ſuch a wrong Caſt to his Mind, as it is hard for him ever to wear off. In ſhort, where the Head of a Family is weak, you hear the Repetitions of his inſipid Pleaſantries, ſhallow Conceits, and topical Points of Mirth, in every Member of it. His Table, his Fire-ſide, his Parties of Diverſion, are all of them ſo many ſtanding Scenes of Folly.

This is one Reaſon why I would the more recommend the Improvements of the Mind to my Female Readers, that a Family may have a double Chance for it, and if it meets with Weakneſs in one of the Heads, may have it made up in the other. It is indeed an unhappy Circumſtance in a Family, where the Wife has more Knowledge than the Husband; but it is better it ſhould be ſo, than that there ſhould be no Knowledge in the whole Houſe. It is highly expedient that at leaſt one of the Perſons, who ſits at the Helm of Affairs, ſhould give an Example of good Senſe to thoſe, who are under them in theſe little Domeſtick Goverameats.

If Folly is of ill Conſequence in the Head of a Family, Vice is much more ſo, as it is of a more pernicious and of a more contagious Nature. When the Maſter is a Profligate, the Rake runs through the Houſe. You hear the Sons talking looſely and ſwearing after their Father, and ſee the Daughters either familiarized to his Diſcourſe, or every Moment bluſhing for him.

The very Footman will be a fine Gentleman in his Maſter's way. He improves by his Table-talk, and repeats in the Kitchin what he learns in the Parlour. Inveſt him with the ſame Title and Ornaments, and you would ſcarce know him from his Lord. He practiſes the ſame Oaths, the ſame Ribaldry, the ſame way of joking.

It is therefore of very great Concern to a Family, that the Ruler of it ſhould be wiſe and virtuous. The firſt of theſe Qualifications does not indeed lie within his Power; but tho' a Man cannot abſtain from being weak, he may from being vicious.

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(Price Two Pence.)